

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Submission

Section A

EQIA Title

Folkestone Library

Responsible Officer

Anna Hendy - GT GC

Type of Activity

Service Change

Service Change

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

Project/Programme

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth, Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Libraries, Registration & Archives

Responsible Head of Service

James Pearson

Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle

Aims and Objectives

Folkestone Library at 2 Grace Hill temporarily closed on 20 December 2022 because it became unsafe for customers and staff. Kent County Council's (KCC) financial situation remains very challenging and means that the Council does not have the budget to repair and reopen the building. The current estimated costs to repair the building is £2.9 million.

Services have been put in place since the temporary closure of the Grace Hill building to minimise the impact of the closure on our customers. These will be kept in place until a long-term town centre location for Folkestone Library opens. The temporary services we have put in place include:

- "Folkestone Library - Heritage and Digital Access" which opened in November 2023 at 5 Grace Hill (previously the Shepway Youth Centre). This is temporarily the location for the complete local studies collection, public PCs, Wi-fi, microfilm reader, photocopying and study space.
- A free reservation service provided at 5 Grace Hill. The service means that customers can order anything from the Kent library catalogue and have it delivered for free to the building for collection.
- The opening hours at the libraries closest to Folkestone town centre have been increased so that there is library provision available six days a week. Hythe Library has increased by 7.5 hours from 37 hours to 44.5 hours per week and Wood Avenue Library has increased by 15.5 hours from 23 hours to 38.5 hours per week. While Folkestone Library was also open on Sundays the temporary provision offers library opening across six days. Sunday usage

was lower compared to the weekdays so to maximise the offer we put the extra hours into the other libraries across Folkestone and Hythe during the week.

- Additional services have been provided at Wood Avenue Library including three additional public computers and increased loanable stock. We have also added this as a location to register a birth or death, in addition to Hythe library.

The temporary provision at 5 Grace Hill was subject to a separate EQIA.

As well as the temporary measures, the following existing library services are also available to help mitigate the impact of the temporary closure:

- E-library service - we have a large digital offer with thousands of free e-books, audiobooks and online newspapers and magazines for all ages and interests.
- Library services direct - including the Home Library Service, where we can deliver library items to people if they cannot visit a library, and also our Mobile Library Service.
- Other libraries in the Folkestone and Hythe district - Hythe, Cheriton, Wood Avenue, Lyminge, Sandgate, Lydd, and New Romney.

KCC is committed to securing a permanent town centre location for the library and registration service. Having carefully considered the options at the point of consultation, KCC proposed to:

- **Permanently leave the Grace Hill building and find an alternative town centre location for the Folkestone library and registration service.**
- **Take forward work with Folkestone & Hythe District Council on moving the library and registration service to FOLCA on the high street.** Ahead of the consultation and subject to any feedback, we considered this to represent the best long-term option for Folkestone's town centre library.

FOLCA is Folkestone & Hythe District Council's project to transform the former Debenhams store (which the District Council owns) on Sandgate Road into a mixed-use building in the heart of Folkestone. The District Council has appointed an architect to develop a concept design for a mixed-use building with a combination of public sector, community and commercial space, including potentially space for KCC to deliver the Folkestone town centre library and registration service. If agreement with the District Council about the FOLCA was not possible then KCC would look for an alternative town centre, high street location to move the library service into.

Discussions with the District Council have progressed positively to the point where we believe this option to move Folkestone Library into FOLCA is feasible and viable.

Before reaching our consultation proposals, a number of other options were considered, and these were detailed in the consultation documentation:

1. **Continue with temporary provision permanently and exit the 2 Grace Hill building.** The temporary provision does not allow full library and registration services to be delivered from one town centre location. The temporary provision was never envisaged or considered as a permanent replacement. The temporary provision at 5 Grace Hill was subject to a separate EQIA.
2. **Make repairs to the 2 Grace Hill building, re-open Folkestone Library and co-locate with other services.**
3. **Relocate full library service to another existing KCC building.** There is no viable alternative KCC building identified so this will not receive any further EQIA analysis.
4. **Sell/lease the 2 Grace Hill building and then lease back part of the building for Folkestone Library.** Creative Folkestone has indicated that it may be prepared to take over responsibility for the Grace Hill building by way of a disposal (either a gift or long-term lease

at peppercorn rent), with the intention of allowing it, as a charity, to raise funding that may not be available to KCC to address the physical condition of the building. This is the subject of ongoing engagement with Creative Folkestone. This option may also involve consideration of proposals from other individuals or groups, should any such proposals be made (including through the ACV process). There is not enough information available at present to undertake a full screening.

- 5. Move service to an alternative leasehold site.** There is not enough information available at present to undertake a full screening. KCC's Property team continue to investigate potential sites which may be viable alternatives to the FOLCA building. Impacts identified with alternative sites will be assessed as part of future decision-making, as appropriate.

KCC is committed to ensuring that all statutory services previously provided at 2 Grace Hill will be provided in any new location within Folkestone town centre.

The Sassoon Gallery would not be included in the service provision in the options detailed above. other than possibly Option 4, this could impact negatively across all protected characteristic groups. The Gallery is not a statutory function for the library service or KCC to deliver. While KCC recognises the support for a gallery, KCC has to balance that against cost of space as well. In that context we are not looking to re-provide the Sassoon Gallery space as a must-have space requirement. We will continue to explore the potential to work in partnership with others to see if there are other options to providing community gallery space in Folkestone. A gallery remaining at the 2 Grace Hill building may come forward as part of any proposal made by other individuals or groups to return to the 2 Grace Hill building.

This EQIA analyses how all viable options might affect or impact the protected characteristic groups and, where adverse impacts are identified, addresses how such impacts may be mitigated. This EQIA is intended to help ensure the Council complies with its duty to have due regard to the need to: (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and (c) foster good relations between persons with who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

An eight-week public consultation has been completed and the EQIA has been updated to reflect the feedback from this including additional ward data which has been followed up through KCC data and analytics team and subsequently further data from the 2021 census has been included within. This EQIA will be part of the paperwork that will be presented to decision makers to inform the decision.

This EQIA will continue to be developed as KCC undertakes further work on the options proposed to progress as detailed in the Cabinet Committee Report for 22 January 2025.

Equality RISK: Low:

It is recommended that KCC takes a key decision in January 2025 to discount some of the options covered at the time of the public consultation.

Option 1, which is the continuation of the temporary provision, has been analysed and it is clear that it presents a number of negative equalities impacts. Whilst there are ways to mitigate the negative impacts, this EQIA supports that option 1 should be rejected.

While it is recommended that option 1 is rejected, in response to consultation feedback officers are proposing to explore and implement an alternative location where temporary library and registration services could better be delivered. This could include a single site temporary library and registration service which could include a children's library, public PCs, birth and death registration, the heritage collections and lending book collections.

This EQIA identifies that the impacts across the protected characteristics for options 2 and 4 (which would involve the library service remaining at 2 Grace Hill) and our consultation proposal of moving to FOLCA or an alternative town centre location (option 5) are similar overall (although there would be some different impacts on some individuals and groups).

All could represent viable locations for a town centre library and registration service providing mitigations are put in place as detailed in this EQIA. This EQIA will be further updated as part of the next stage of work to inform a future further key decision on the long-term future of Grace Hill and the location of the Folkestone town centre library and registration service.

The findings of this EQIA support the recommendation that option 4 and 5 continue to be explored, considered and evaluated.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

No

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

A public consultation ran from 18 July to 11 September 2024. The consultation questionnaire included a question to capture feedback on the consultation stage EQIA and if there was anything else consultees felt we should consider relating to equality and diversity. 22% of consultees provided a response to this question. An analysis of responses can be found within the consultation report. An appendix (Appendix 3) with the full list of responses to this question is attached. It details how the comments have been recognised, considered and incorporated into the EQIA where applicable.

Feedback was captured via a consultation questionnaire which was available on consultation webpage (www.kent.gov.uk/folkestonelibrary). Hard copies of the consultation material, including the questionnaire were also available in all Folkestone and Hythe district libraries and on request. Easy Read and large print formats were also available. The consultation material and webpage included details of how people could contact KCC to ask a question, request hard copies or an alternative format. In addition, four in person drop-in sessions were held at Wood Avenue Library and 5 Grace Hill. A Word version of the questionnaire was provided on the webpage for people who did not wish to complete the online version.

The consultation was promoted in a mix of digital (for example, social media, emails, website) and non-digital methods (for example, posters, postcards, newspaper advert). Library staff were briefed to promote the consultation to service users and provide support as required. Library public computers could be used to access the consultation website and complete the online questionnaire.

Emails were sent to key stakeholders, including Folkestone & Hythe District Council, the town and parish councils, community groups, local charity organisations, library groups and partners encouraging their participation in the consultation and support promoting it to their residents, members or the people they work with. Local schools were contacted twice, at the beginning and towards the end of the consultation. The consultation period coincided with the annual library school age children's Summer Reading Challenge which is a busy time of year seeing many families visiting libraries.

This EQIA has been updated following the consultation and will be used to inform any decision KCC then takes.

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Residents of Folkestone and key local stakeholders. In detail:

- Library customers
- Wider Folkestone and Hythe residents
- Folkestone district library staff
- Folkestone and Hythe KCC members
- Folkestone & Hythe District Council
- Key interest/campaign group or key customer contacts
- Local MP
- Creative Folkestone
- Folkestone Town Council, Sandgate Parish Council and Hythe Town Council
- Cheriton Nepalese Group
- Library related groups, such as Books Groups, Baby Rhyme, Books Beyond Words etc.
- Folkestone Community Fridge (currently partners at Wood Avenue Library)
- Living Words (displaced due to Folkestone temp closure)
- Local schools and colleges
- Department for Culture Media and Sport

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

Yes. This is version 2 of this EQIA. A consultation stage EQIA (version 1) formed part of the public consultation. We have also completed an EQIA on the temporary provision.

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes. Since the temporary closure of the library local people and community groups have been providing feedback through a variety of means and so we recognise the strength and depth of local feeling regarding the 2 Grace Hill building and the importance of Folkestone's town centre library and registration service. We have reviewed all comments provided on the EQIA in the consultation feedback and adapted the EQIA to a new version mindful of the feedback where relevant.

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff/volunteers

Staff/volunteers

Residents/communities/citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

Following the temporary closure of the 2 Grace Hill building, Folkestone's town centre library and registration services are being delivered from a number of different buildings.

Option 1 Making the temporary provisions permanent does not provide any positive impacts as it would not return a full statutory library service to one location in Folkestone's town centre.

Option 2 and 4

Re-opening Folkestone Library in 2 Grace Hill would ensure that the full town centre service, with equivalent book stock and event space is delivered in one building and available for everyone.

Opening Folkestone Library in 2 Grace Hill with other public and community services, such as the option being discussed with Creative Folkestone, would offer opportunities such as partnership working with other customer and community services. This brings more services to people in one convenient place but also has the potential to increase the take-up of library and other services for those who don't currently use them.

Grace Hill is accessible from the high street and there are nearby public transport services and parking options.

Grace Hill is located in the Folkestone Central ward next to the Folkestone Harbour ward which is an area of high deprivation. The 2 Grace Hill library building is closer to parts of the community who could particularly benefit from accessing library services although there are areas of need across Folkestone. Those living in areas of high deprivation may face greater challenges in accessing services.

The consultation proposal/option 5

A move to a building co-located with other public and community services offers opportunities such as partnership working with other customer and community services. This brings more services to people in one convenient place but also has the potential to increase the take-up of library and other services for those who don't currently use them.

Re-opening Folkestone Library in FOLCA or an alternative town centre location would ensure that the full town centre service, with equivalent book stock and event space is delivered in one building and available for everyone.

Moving to a high street location like FOLCA or another high street building would offer a positive impact for many customers as it would remain accessible to public transport links.

A high street location could be more accessible for those with mobility impairments due to the proximity to other shops and services that people will want to access. The high street is also accessible from public transport and parking options.

Library usage data (Appendix 2) from before 2 Grace Hill temporarily closed, showed that the largest proportion of library users travelled from Folkestone East and Folkestone Central wards which would make the library closer for them if the decision is taken to relocate to FOLCA on the high street. While concern has been raised that a high street location would make the library less accessible for those from the Folkestone Harbour ward it is felt that any high street location would be positive overall given that other services, retail and leisure facilities are also in the town and the distances involved are reasonable.

The consultation proposal and options 2 to 5 would all restore the full town centre library and registration provision.

Consultation proposal and options 2, 4 and 5

Re-instating a full town centre library and registration service would provide the following benefits:

Age/Children/Pregnancy and Maternity

- Early years activities, such as Rhyme Time and Summer Reading Challenge can return to Folkestone town centre providing greater accessibility.
- Birth and death registration appointments would resume in Folkestone town centre.

- Customers would be able to access a full library and registration service/full public computers/activities in the town centre again.
- All of these activities would be available to attend in a town centre location.

Disability/Carers

- Books Beyond Words reading group (reading group for people with learning disabilities) could resume at a town centre location and this option would be discussed with the group.
- Specialist book stock to support those with disabilities would be available again at a town centre library location.

Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation

- Specialist LGBTQIA+ book stock would be available again at town centre library location.

Race

- Dual language and specialist book stock to support those whose first language is not English would be available again at town centre library location.
- Potential for meet and practice English groups to be setup in a town centre location once more.

Marriage and Civil Partnerships

- Notice of marriage and/or civil partnership appointments could return to a town centre library location.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for Age?

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Age

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Library customers would need to travel to one of the other Folkestone and Hythe district libraries to access full library services and there is no children's library provision in the temporary town centre library at 5 Grace Hill. The closest libraries to Folkestone town centre are in Wood Avenue or Cheriton. This additional travel could be more of a challenge for elderly customers or those with young children and babies.
- Early years library initiatives such as the Rhyme Time and Playground sessions for pre-schoolers, would not be available in Folkestone town centre because there is not the space to run these in the temporary provision.
- People with young children, young people in their teens or older people may find it difficult to travel to libraries further away.
- Use of public transport may have a cost attached and for those using an older person's bus pass, which has time restrictions.
- No public toilets available at the other district libraries (although provision available in current Folkestone Library - Heritage and Digital Access).

Options 2 and 4 – Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill

- Under option 4 the library may be split over two floors depending on which other organisations or services are co-located within the building. This could be more of a challenge to elderly customers, or those with babies. It should be noted that this was the case before the library was temporarily closed, with the main library downstairs and the local

studies upstairs. How the building is kept accessible would be key to consider moving forward.

- 2 Grace Hill is located at the bottom of a hill, and there is a walk needed to the high street and other local services which could be a challenge for some older customers or those with babies.
- While 2 Grace Hill has nearby parking, the nearest is only available for short term parking.
- 2 Grace Hill is located on a very busy road which could pose accessibility challenges that could disproportionately impact, elderly people and those with young children.

Consultation proposal and option 5 - Move to FOLCA/other town centre location

- The journey from the current building to the proposed new location at FOLCA is uphill. This could be more difficult for some older customers or those with babies if they live closer to the current location on Grace Hill.
- The library may be split over two floors depending on who is co-located within the building. This could be more of a challenge to elderly customers or those with babies. How the building is kept accessible would be key to consider moving forward.
- Co-location options may present a busier library space and therefore potential challenges for some in visiting a noisier and busier space.

Mitigating Actions for Age

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Promote digital resources and Home Library Service (HLS) which is where a volunteer can deliver books direct to people's homes.
- Promote our eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.
- Review of district opening hours and consider making permanent the extended opening hours in place at Wood Avenue and Hythe Libraries.
- Customers can ask to use the staff toilets in locations without public toilets, but these may not be suitable for people with disabilities. This also may be a barrier as customers may be embarrassed to ask.
- The distance from 2 Grace Hill to FOLCA is 0.3 miles. FOLCA is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities.

Options 2 and 4 – Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill

- Ensure working lift is available. Like all mechanical lifts it is to be expected that they will have periods of mechanical breakdown.
- In looking at the Creative Folkestone option or any building proposals to look to retain the library at 2 Grace Hill, KCC would ensure that in discussions with Creative Folkestone and/or another partner any building design resulted in a fully accessible library space, and that as much of the public library and registration service space was on the ground floor. It would also be an opportunity to refresh the library layout where possible. We would work to ensure any new design and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.
- For those unable to travel to the Grace Hill location or any nearby libraries we can offer the Home Library Service as an alternative way to access the service.

Consultation proposal and option 5 - Move to FOLCA/other town centre location

- FOLCA is a more central town centre location than 2 Grace Hill as it is on the high street. FOLCA in comparison to 2 Grace Hill is closer to the bus station (there may be future

changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre). There is a car park located very close to the FOLCA building.

- Ensure clear signage is in place as is the case for 2 Grace Hill and raise awareness of the new location. A communications plan would be put in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales.
- For those customers unable to travel to a high street location we can offer the Home Library Service as an alternative way to access the service.
- The data on the home addresses of Folkestone Library customers from 2022 (prior to the temporary closure) was reviewed (Appendix 2) to cross reference with the wards served by Folkestone Library. The data shows that the highest proportion of Folkestone Library users live in the Folkestone Central ward which is closer to FOLCA.
- For the customers travelling from Folkestone Harbour and Folkestone East wards there is already an uphill journey to get to 2 Grace Hill. The distance from 2 Grace Hill to FOLCA is 0.3 miles. FOLCA is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities.
- If the service is split over two floors we would ensure a working lift is available and that the building is accessible for all including having accessible public toilets.
- Considering equality feedback, we would look to engage with young people (teens) to ensure the layout is optimal for all. A new layout would be considered in line with ensuring accessibility, this could include quieter spaces, dimmable lighting (not available in Grace Hill). We would work to ensure any new building and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

20. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

Yes

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- To access a physical library service, Folkestone town centre customers would need to travel to one of the district libraries - the closest are in Wood Avenue or Cheriton. This could be more of a challenge for customers with disabilities, for example, mobility impairments, anxiety, visual impairments or people with learning disabilities, who might struggle to get to a non-town centre location.
- The Books Beyond Words group would remain at Wood Avenue Library meaning potential access issues as described above for this group.
- Book stock which supports different disabilities (for example, Access 2 Books – Braille and Giant Print, Books Beyond Word – supporting people with learning disabilities, Children's mental health Reading Well book stock etc) may not be readily available at the smaller libraries so customers may have to use the reservation service. This means they may have to pay reservation fees for books they wouldn't normally have to if there was a full town centre library.

Options 2 and 4 – Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill

- The library may be split over two floors depending on who is co-located within the building which could present a challenge to those with disabilities as there have been times when the lift is out of order for some time.
- In looking at the Creative Folkestone option or any building proposals to look to retain the library at 2 Grace Hill, KCC would ensure that in discussions with Creative Folkestone

and/or another partner any building design resulted in a fully accessible library space, and that as much of the public library and registration service space was on the ground floor. It would also be an opportunity to refresh the library layout where possible. We would work to ensure any new design and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.

- For those unable to travel to the Grace Hill location or any nearby libraries we can offer the Home Library Service as an alternative way to access the service. The service also offers an extensive range of digital resources.
- The Grace Hill building is located towards the bottom of a hill, approximately 0.3 miles from the high street and other local services which could be a challenge for some customers with disabilities.
- Co-location options may present a busier library space and therefore potential challenges for some in visiting a noisier and busier space.
- The Grace Hill building is located on a very busy road which could pose accessibility challenges that could disproportionately impact those with disabilities.

Consultation proposal and option 5 - Move to FOLCA/other town centre location

- FOLCA is towards the top of the high street so the journey from the current building to the proposed new location at FOLCA is uphill. This could be more difficult for someone with mobility issues if they live closer to the current location on Grace Hill.
- The library may be split over two floors depending on who is co-located within the building which could present a challenge to those with disabilities.
- For some customers accessing a new and different building can be daunting for example those with neuro diversities.
- Co-location options may present a busier library space and therefore potential challenges for some in visiting a noisier and busier space.

Mitigating actions for Disability

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Wood Avenue and Sandgate libraries can be highlighted as nearby alternatives with automatic door access. Wood Avenue also has extended opening hours.
- Promotion of digital resources and the Home Library Service, which is where a volunteer can deliver books direct to people's homes.
- Promotion of eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.
- Extra vigilance around which customers may be eligible for an Exempt card, meaning they wouldn't have to pay for reservations.
- A free reservation pickup service is available at the current temporary library provision at 5 Grace Hill, which could be made permanent.

Options 2 and 4 – Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill

- Ensure working lift is available and continued provision of accessible public toilets. The lifts present at 2 Grace Hill have suffered a number of breakdowns and while reported and fixed it is nearing end of its mechanical life so will need to be factored into any building restoration.
- In looking at the Creative Folkestone option or any building proposals to look to retain the library at 2 Grace Hill, KCC would ensure that in discussions with Creative Folkestone and/or another partner any building design resulted in a fully accessible library space, and that as much of the public library and registration service space was on the ground floor. It would also be an opportunity to refresh the library layout where possible. We would work to ensure any new design and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.

- For those unable to travel to the Grace Hill location or any nearby libraries we can offer the Home Library Service as an alternative way to access the service and promotion of eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.

Consultation proposal and option 5 - Move to FOLCA/other town centre location

- FOLCA is a more central town centre location than 2 Grace Hill as it is on the high street. FOLCA in comparison to 2 Grace Hill is closer to the bus station (may be future changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre) and equal distance to the train station. There are car parks located very close to the FOLCA building at Middelburg Place and Bouverie Place which are multi storey car parks with designated disabled spaces.
- Ensure clear signage is in place as is the case for 2 Grace Hill and raise awareness of the new location. A communications plan would be put in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales.
- The Home Library Service and the alternative Folkestone and Hythe district libraries offer alternative ways to access the service for those customers unable to travel to a high street location. The service also offers free eBook/magazine/newspaper collections via our website. Further promotion could be carried out to raise awareness of these services.
- The data on the home addresses of Folkestone Library customers from 2022 (prior to the temporary closure) was reviewed (Appendix 2) to cross reference with the wards served by Folkestone Library. The data shows that the highest proportion of Folkestone library users live in the Folkestone Central ward which is closer to FOLCA.
- For the customers travelling from Folkestone Harbour and Folkestone East wards there is already an uphill journey to get to 2 Grace Hill. The distance from 2 Grace Hill to FOLCA is 0.3 miles. FOLCA is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities.
- For those with neurodivergent conditions or anxiety when accessing new spaces we would provide a social story for a new location and a virtual tour to allow customers to familiarise themselves with the space before visiting. We would also arrange a virtual tour to be uploaded to our webpage.
- A new layout would be considered in line with ensuring accessibility, this could include quieter spaces, dimmable lighting (not available in Grace Hill). We would work to ensure any new building and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.
- If the service is split over two floors we would ensure a working lift is available and that the building is accessible for all including having accessible public toilets.
- Public/accessible toilets would be part of the service requirements. There may be opportunities to look at further enhancements including a Changing Place facility. We would raise this with Folkestone & Hythe District Council if the decision was taken to progress this proposal.

Responsible Officer for Disability

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

21. Negative Impacts and mitigating actions for Sex

Are there negative impacts for Sex

No

Details of negative impacts for Sex

Not applicable

Mitigating actions for Sex

Not applicable

Responsible Officer for Sex

Not applicable

22. Negative Impacts and mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Yes

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Limited specialist LGBTQIA+ book stock in the smaller district libraries so customers are unable to browse collections and would have to reserve and pay a reservation fee.

Options 2 and 4 – Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill - No negative impacts identified. Services would be designed with all needs in mind including book stock that covers the full range of customer preference.

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Need to review but likely that there would be a need to look at some form of stock collection or continue with the free reservation collection service.
- Promote our eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

Are there negative impacts for Race

Yes

Negative impacts for Race

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Smaller district libraries have limited ethnic minority group book stock and books in different languages, meaning customers may have to make reservations.

Options 2 and 4 - Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill - No negative impacts identified. Services would be designed with all needs in mind including book stock that covers the full range of customer preference.

Mitigating actions for Race

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Need to review if need to develop the stock collection available in the town centre as no book lending collections available or continue the free reservation collection service.
- Promote our eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.

Options 2 and 4 - Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill

- In looking at the Creative Folkestone option or any building proposals to look to retain the library at 2 Grace Hill, KCC would ensure that in discussions with Creative Folkestone and/or another partner any building design resulted in a fully accessible library space, and that as much of the public library and registration service space was on the ground floor. It would also be an opportunity to refresh the library layout where possible. We would work to ensure any new design and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.
- For those unable to travel to the Grace Hill location or any nearby libraries we can offer the Home Library Service as an alternative way to access the service.

Consultation proposal - Move to FOLCA

- FOLCA is a more central town centre location than 2 Grace Hill as it is on the high street. FOLCA in comparison to 2 Grace Hill is closer to the bus station (there may be future changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre) and equal distance to the train station. There are car parks located very close to the FOLCA building at Middelburg Place and Bouverie Place which are multi storey car parks with designated disabled spaces.
- We would ensure that clear signage is in place as is the case for 2 Grace Hill and raise awareness of the new location. A communications plan would be put in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales.
- The Home Library Service and the alternative Folkestone and Hythe district libraries offer alternative ways to access the service for those customers unable to travel to a high street location.
- The data on the home addresses of Folkestone Library customers from 2022 (prior to the temporary closure) was reviewed (Appendix 2) to cross reference with the wards served by Folkestone Library. The data shows that the highest proportion of Folkestone library users live in the Folkestone Central ward which is closer to FOLCA.
- For the customers travelling from Folkestone Harbour and Folkestone East wards there is already an uphill journey to get to 2 Grace Hill. The distance from 2 Grace Hill to FOLCA is 0.3 miles. FOLCA is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

24. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief

No

Negative impacts for Religion and belief

Not applicable

Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Not applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief

Not applicable

25. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

Yes

Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- There is a limited provision of specialist LGBTQI+ book stock at the smaller district libraries meaning customer may have to make reservations and pay.

Consultation proposal and options 2 and 4 – Move to FOLCA/Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill - No negative impacts identified. Services will be designed with all needs in mind including book stock that covers the full range of customer preference.

Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Review availability of specialist LGBTQI+ stock in the town centre but a free reservation collection service is available from temporary library provision.
- Promote our eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

26. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity

Yes

Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- No town centre provision means that customers would need to travel to other libraries to access our physical services. This could be more of a problem for women who are pregnant or mothers who are on maternity leave, who may be unable to travel to another location.
- No Playground and Baby Rhyme Time sessions at a Folkestone town centre location which could result in customers having to travel further/additional cost or not being able to attend.
- The registration of births is not available from town centre location so customers needing to register a birth must travel to their closest alternative registration point in Wood Avenue Library or Hythe library.

Consultation proposal and options 2 and 4 – Move to FOLCA/Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill - No negative impacts identified. Registration of births and Playground and Baby Rhyme Time sessions would be available in a town centre location again. Services would be designed with all needs in mind including book stock that covers the full range of customer preference and ensuring the provision of baby change facilities as at 2 Grace Hill.

Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Review of provision of children's stock.
- Customers can be directed to services and sessions at the nearest possible library in Wood Avenue, Cheriton, Sandgate or Hythe.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Yes

Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Notice of marriage/civil partnership cannot be given in a town centre library location. Customers would need to travel to Wood Avenue Library.

Consultation proposal and options 2 and 4 – Move to FOLCA/Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill - No negative impacts identified. Notice of marriage/civil partnerships would be delivered again from a town centre location.

Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Retention of Notice of marriage appointments at Wood Avenue Library.

Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

28. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities**Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities**

Yes

Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities**Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently**

- Without a town centre provision, customers would need to travel to other libraries to access our physical services. This could mean that Carers are unable to access physical library services because they are unable to travel further with the person they are caring for or they are unable to spare the additional travel time/cost.
- Book stock which provides help to Carers and also may support different disabilities may not be available at the smaller district libraries so customers may have to pay and reserve books.

Options 2 and 4 - Library service remains at Grace Hill

- The library may be split over two floors depending on who is co-located within the building which could present a challenge to those with disabilities and therefore their Carers.
- Grace Hill is located towards the bottom of a hill, approximately 0.3 miles from the high street and other local services which could be a challenge for some customers with disabilities and therefore their Carers.

Consultation proposal and option 5 - Move to FOLCA/other town centre location

- The library may be split over two floors depending on who is co-located within the building which could present a challenge to those with disabilities and therefore their Carers.
- FOLCA is towards the top of the high street so the journey from the current building to the proposed new location at FOLCA is uphill. This could be more difficult for someone with mobility issues and their Carers if they live closer to the current location on Grace Hill.

Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities**Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently**

- Promotion of digital resources and Home Library Service.
- Review of hours across the district. Consider extended opening hours being made permanent in Wood Avenue and Hythe Libraries.
- Vigilance around which customers may be eligible for an Exempt card, meaning they wouldn't have to pay for reservations.
- Review and consider retention of free reservation service.

Options 2 and 4 - Library service remains at Grace Hill

- Ensure working lift is available and continued provision of accessible public toilets. The lift at 2 Grace Hill has suffered a number of breakdowns and while reported and fixed it is nearing end of its mechanical life so will need to be factored into any building restoration.

Consultation proposal - Move to FOLCA

- FOLCA is a more central town centre location than 2 Grace Hill as it is on the high street.
- FOLCA in comparison to 2 Grace Hill is closer to the bus station. There may be future changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre) and equal distance to the train station. There are car parks located very close to the FOLCA building at Middelburg Place and Bouverie Place which are multi storey car parks with designated disabled spaces.

- If the service is split over two floors we would ensure a working lift is available and that the building is accessible for all.
- Ensure clear signage is in place as is the case for 2 Grace Hill and raise awareness of the new location. A communications plan would be put in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales.

Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

Appendix 1

Demographic Profile: Folkestone and Hythe

Data primarily sourced from Office of National Statistics (ONS) data from KCC's [website¹](#).

Folkestone is a coastal town in East Kent with a population of 52,279 (2021 census) and sits within the Folkestone & Hythe District which has an overall population of 110,200, forecast to rise to 120,700 by 2027.

Age and Sex

4.5% of the population of Folkestone & Hythe fall within the 0-4 age group, 10.7% are aged 5-14 and 9.5% are aged 15-24. 49.7% of the population are aged 25-64, while 18.7% are aged 65-79, and 6.8% are 80 and older.

48.7% of the population are male, and 51.3% female.

Life expectancy in Folkestone & Hythe is 79.2 years for males and 83.2 for females.

Diversity

88% of the population are White British, and 12% are in ethnic minority groups which are broken down as follows:

Groups	Percentage
White minority groups	4.6%
Asian	3.9%
Black Caribbean or African	0.6%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	1.9%
Other ethnic groups	1%
Total	12%

13.7% of young people aged 0-15 are in ethnic minority groups, as are 14.4% of adults aged 16-64 and 5.3% of older people. 2.3% of households have no adults with English as their main language, while 0.6% have no adults but at least one person aged 3 to 15 who has English as their main language.

48% of people stated their religion is Christian, 1.3% Hindu, 1% Muslim and 0.9% Buddhist. 42.1% stated that they have no religion.

¹ www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/area-profiles

Socio-economic groups and Deprivation

The Mosaic data for Folkestone and Hythe from 2022 is as follows:

Mosaic Group	Definition	Percentage of overall population
Group D – Rural Reality	Householders living in inexpensive homes in village communities	13.6%
Group E – Senior Security	Elderly people with assets who are enjoying a comfortable retirement	13.2%
Group C – Country Living	Well off owners in rural locations enjoying the benefits of country life	9.5%
Group H – Aspiring Homemakers	Younger households settling down in housing priced within their means	9.4%
Group L – Vintage Value	Elderly people reliant on support to meet financial or practical needs	9.1%
Group O – Rental Hubs	Educated young people privately renting in urban neighbourhoods	8.2%
Group B – Prestige Positions	Established families in large detached homes living upmarket lifestyles	6.6%
Group F – Suburban Stability	Mature suburban owners living in settled lives in mid-range housing	5.8%
Group G – Domestic Success	Thriving families who are busy bringing up children and following careers	5.6%
Group I – Family Basics	Families with limited resources who have to budget to make ends meet	5.4%
Group J – Transient Renters	Single people privately renting low cost homes for the short term	4.7%
Group M – Modest Traditions	Mature homeowners of value homes enjoying stable lifestyles	3.7%
Group N – Urban Cohesion	Residents of settled urban communities with a strong sense of identity	3.2%
Group K – Municipal Challenge	Urban renters of social housing facing an array of challenges	1.8%
Group A – City Prosperity	High status city dwellers living in central locations and pursuing careers with high rewards	0.2%

Mosaic is a classification system designed by Experian to profile the characteristics of the UK population. Each household in the UK is classified as belonging to one of 15 groups and 66 types. These groups identify clusters of individuals and households that are as similar as possible to each other, and as different as possible to any other group. They describe the residents of a postcode in terms of their typical demographics, their behaviours, their lifestyle characteristics and their attitudes.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for 2019 reports that Folkestone comprises 67 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). Four of which rank among the top 10% most deprived areas in the country. The wards within which these LSOAs sit are Folkestone Harbour, East Folkestone and Folkestone Central.

2 Grace Hill sits within the Harbour Ward and FOLCA is in Folkestone Central.

14.9% of 16 to 64 year olds in the district were recorded as claiming Universal Credit in November 2022, which is 1.6% higher than the average for Kent, and 0.8% higher than the national average. 63.8% of the claimants are not in employment. As of December 2022, Folkestone Harbour, Folkestone Central and East Folkestone wards have the highest rate of unemployment within the Folkestone & Hythe District².

East Folkestone sits within the top 10 wards in Kent with the highest number of children in absolute low-income families³.

Central and Folkestone Harbour ward data from 2021 Census

Ward	% Population Disabled Under the Equality Act
Folkestone Central	25.1%
Folkestone Harbour	22.5%

Ward	% Population Under 16
Folkestone Central	13.5%
Folkestone Harbour	21.5%

Ward	% Population from an Ethnic Minority background*
Folkestone Central	23.9%
Folkestone Harbour	14.5%

* including white ethnic minorities

Ward	% of Population from an Ethnic Minority Background**
Folkestone Central	11.8%
Folkestone Harbour	7.3%

² Kent Analytics: Ward Unemployment Bulletin - www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/economy-and-employment#tab-5

³ Kent Analytics: Children in Poverty 2022 - www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/7956/Children-in-poverty.pdf

Folkestone Library Statistics

Issues (library items taken out e.g. book loans)

The table below shows issue rankings for Folkestone and Hythe district libraries in relation to the 99 Kent Libraries. The more library loan items taken out the higher the ranking, e.g. 1 equals the highest number of loans in the county, whereas 99 equals the lowest level of loans.

Library	Issue ranking for April to November 2022 ⁴
Hythe	21
Folkestone	25
Cheriton	40
New Romney	54
Lyminge	64
Wood Avenue	72
Sandgate	89
Lydd	94

Active Borrowers

The number of people borrowing items from Folkestone Library had been steadily increasing throughout the year, and from April to November 2022 increased by 18%. In November Folkestone Library had 2,911 active borrowers, while Hythe Library, although issuing more items, had 2,347 active borrowers.

1,402 customers borrowed items during the last full quarter of Folkestone Library being open, and these customers can be broken down into the following age categories:

Age band	No. of customers	Percentage
0-10	536	38.2%
11-19	126	9.0%
20-29	62	4.4%
30-39	141	10.1%
40-49	126	9.0%
50-59	88	6.3%
60 plus	314	22.4%
Age unknown	9	0.6%

Of these customers 45.9% identify as female, 25.9% as male, 0.14% as non-binary/3rd gender while 28.03% did not specify their gender identity.

17 customers (1.21%) indicated that they had a disability as follows:

Disability	No. of customers
Mental health	2
Physical impairment	5
Vision impairment	2
Learning impairment	8

⁴ This period was chosen as this was the last period during the financial year 22/23 when Folkestone Library was open.

Not all customers will provide information on disability when joining the library service, therefore it is likely that the true figure would be more.

Of the 335 customers who indicated their ethnicity, 83% were White British and 17% in ethnic minority groups which can be broken down as follows:

Ethnicity	No. of customers
Asian/Asian British – Chinese	2
Asian/Asian British – Indian	4
Asian/Asian British – Bangladeshi	2
Asian/Asian British – Pakistani	3
Asian/Asian British – Other	1
Black/Black British – African	3
Black/Black British – Caribbean	1
Black/Black British – Other	1
Mixed/Multiple – White and Asian	2
Mixed/Multiple – White and Black Caribbean	1
White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2
White – Irish	1
White – Other	24
Other ethnic group	10

Visitors

Library	No. of visitors April to November 2022
Folkestone	50,675
Hythe	38,399
Wood Avenue*	22,209
Cheriton	21,397
Sandgate	6,982
New Romney	6,392
Lydd	3,092
Lyminge	3,007

*Wood Avenue Library visitors include customers using the Community Fridge

PC Usage

Use of the public computers (PCs) increased by 36% from April to November 2022 compared with the previous year, with over 6,000 hours of PC usage in total for the year up to December 2022.

Events and Activities

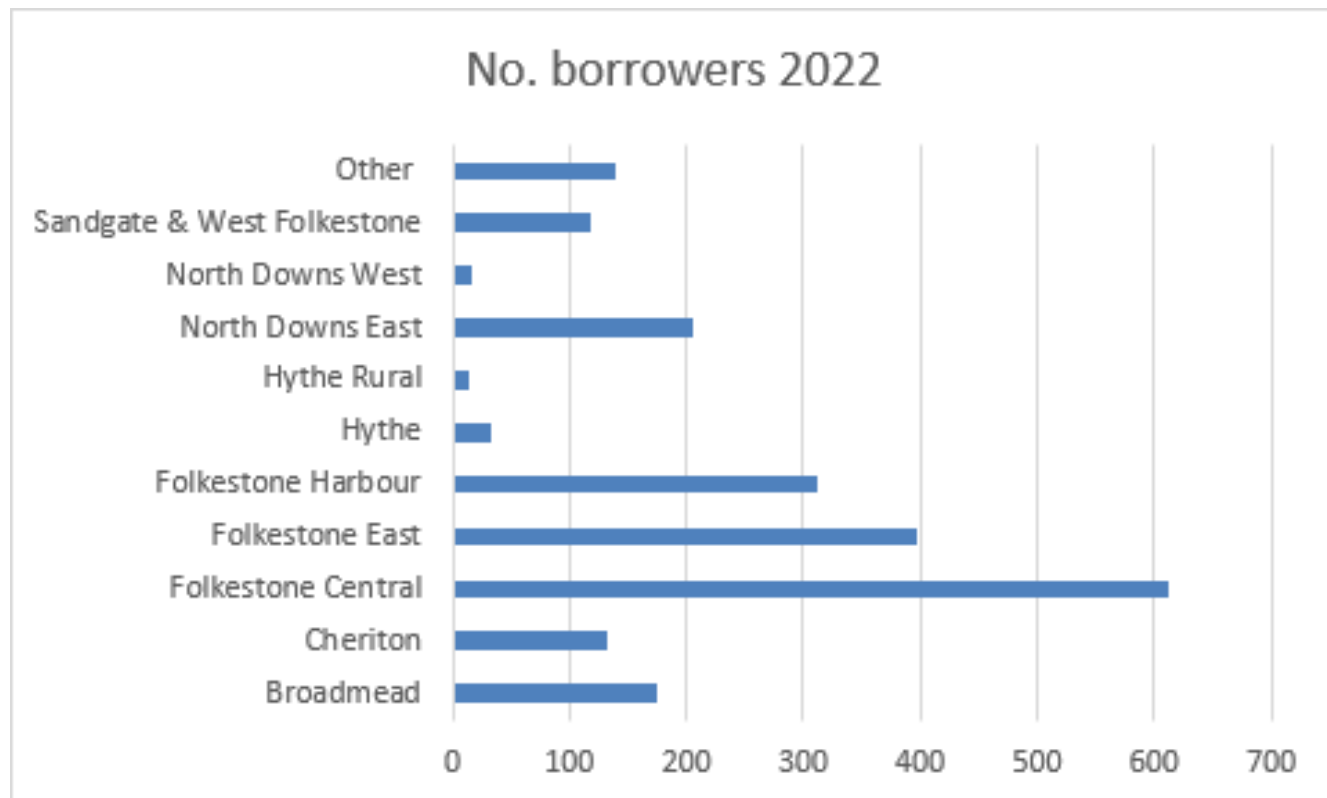
From April to November 2022, Folkestone Library held 141 community events and activities, with 1,464 attendees. These activities include the following:

- Rhyme Time for babies, toddlers and their parents and carers.
- Playground artist-led sessions for babies 0-18 months and their parents and carers.
- Books Beyond Words book group sessions for adults with learning disabilities.
- Meet and Practise English sessions for adults whose first language is not English.

- School Holiday activities in conjunction with the Summer Reading Challenge.
- The library also hosted a series of sessions for the Flux programme with partners Living Words, who were working with 18 to 25 year old LGBTQIA+ people addressing issues around self-harm, ill mental health, and suicide through the creative arts.

Appendix 2

Library borrowers in 2022 cross referenced with wards that are served by Folkestone Library at 2 Grace Hill:



NB - North Downs West would be served mostly by Lyminge Library, and Hythe by Hythe Library. 2 Grace Hill sits within the Harbour ward and FOLCA is in Folkestone Central ward.

The details of the above graph are detailed in the table below:

Ward	Number of Registered Borrowers at Folkestone Library
Folkestone Central	613
Folkestone East	396
Folkestone Harbour	313
North Downs East	205
Broadmead	174
Cheriton	132
Sandgate & West Folkestone	117
Hythe	34
North Downs West	17
Hythe Rural	13
Other (covers customers from other wards/districts who have registered at Folkestone; includes Romney Marsh, Dover, Dartford, Canterbury, Ashford, Maidstone, Thanet, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells),	139